

I CLAIM:

1. A method of processing a call made to a telephone number and directed to a specific communications device to which that telephone number is assigned, the method comprising:

receiving a sequence of signals representing a set of prefix characteristics immediately preceding a telephone number, the set of prefix characteristics being distinguishable from said telephone number and defining a destination for said call, each telephone number having at least one destination; and

forwarding said call to the destination defined by the set of prefix characteristics.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising representing a destination with a set of prefix characteristics.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising directing a call to a destination by dialing a set of prefix characteristics representing the destination and a telephone number having the same destination assigned to the telephone number.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the set of prefix characteristics corresponds to a destination for a call made to a telephone number, the destination being a specific communications device.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising allocating a plurality of sets of prefix characteristics to a plurality of communications devices, each communications device being a destination for a call and having one set of prefix characteristics.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising determining said destination indicated by the set of prefix characteristics.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising assigning at least one additional destination to a telephone number, the set of prefix characteristics and the telephone number combining to represent a destination for a particular call.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising determining if a call is made from a cellular telephone or a land-based telephone.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising directing the call to a cellular processing network if the set of prefix characteristics indicates that the call is made to a cellular telephone.

10. A method of directing a call to a specific communications device, comprising:

allocating a plurality of sets of prefix characteristics to a plurality of communications devices, each communications device being a destination for a call and having one set of prefix characteristics;

receiving a call having a set of prefix characteristics and a telephone number;

determining the destination indicated by the set of prefix characteristics; and

routing the call to the communications device represented by the set of prefix characteristics.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising directing a call to a destination by dialing a set of prefix characteristics representing the destination and a telephone number having the same destination assigned to the telephone number.

12. The method of claim 10, further comprising assigning at least one additional destination to a telephone number, the set of prefix characteristics and the telephone number combining to represent a destination for a particular call.

13. The method of claim 10, further comprising determining if a call is made from a cellular telephone or a land-based telephone.

14. The method of claim 10, further comprising directing the call to a cellular processing network if the set of prefix characteristics indicates that the call is made to a cellular telephone.

15. A system for processing a call made to a telephone number and directed to a specific communications device to which that telephone number is assigned, the system comprising:

a sequence of signals representing a set of prefix characteristics and a telephone number, the set of prefix characteristics immediately preceding the telephone number and being distinguishable from said telephone number and defining a destination for said call, each telephone number having at least one destination; and

a routing apparatus having a switching component and an identification component for determining the intended destination of a call and forwarding the call to that destination.

16. The system of claim 15, wherein a destination is a specific communications device.

17. The system of claim 15, wherein the set of prefix characteristics corresponds to a destination for the call made to a telephone number, each telephone number having a default destination.

18. The system of claim 15, wherein each telephone number includes at least one set of prefix characteristics.

19. The system of claim 15, wherein a different set of prefix characteristics is used for every destination assigned to a telephone number.

20. The system of claim 15, wherein said routing apparatus is a public switched telephone network.

21. The system of claim 15, further comprising an additional routing apparatus, the call being directed to said additional routing apparatus prior to said destination if an area code is dialed.

22. The system of claim 15, further comprising at least one cellular network including a base station and mobile switching center, the call being routed through said at least one cellular network if originating from a cellular phone.

23. The system of claim 15, wherein the call is directed to said at least one cellular network if the set of prefix characteristics indicates that the destination is a cellular telephone.

24. A routing system for directing calls to different communications devices having identical numbers, comprising:

a network having a routing apparatus including a switching component and an identification component for processing a call to a destination, the call including a sequence of signals indicating a set of prefix characteristics and a telephone number, the destination being identified by the set of prefix characteristics; and

at least one communications device assigned to a telephone number.

25. The system of claim 24, wherein a destination is a specific communications device.

26. The routing system of claim 24, wherein the network determines the destination of the call and forwards the call to that destination.

27. The system of claim 24, wherein each telephone number includes at least one set of prefix characteristics.

28. The system of claim 24, wherein a different set of prefix characteristics is used for every communications device assigned to a telephone number.

29. The system of claim 24, wherein said network is a public switched telephone network.

30. The system of claim 24, further comprising an additional routing apparatus, the call being directed to said additional routing apparatus prior to said destination if an area code is dialed.

31. The system of claim 24, further comprising at least one cellular network including a base station and mobile switching center, the call being routed through said at least one cellular network if originating from a cellular phone.

32. The system of claim 31, wherein the call is directed to said at least one cellular network if the set of prefix characteristics indicates that the destination is a cellular telephone.